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AUTHOR Spinelli, Philip R.; Packard Ted
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ABSTRACT

This document describes a developmental/preventive behavioral self-control seminar which was offered to undergraduate college students through a regularly scheduled class. The course format included lectures, personal projects and group interaction, as well as reading and discussing the basic concepts of behavioral modification. Specific techniques developed and carried out by class members included identifying specific target behaviors, self-monitoring, making appropriate environmental changes and arranging for self-imposed consequences. Each student made a behavioral contract each week and reported to the class on results. From the authors' experience to date, it would seem that a behavioral self-control class has both remedial as well as developmental/preventive capabilities. College students were able to use the experience to execute positive changes in what would be considered normal life problems. The authors discuss other uses for such classes in the mental health areas. (Author/PC)

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BEHAVIORAL SELF-CONTROL DELIVERY SYSTEMS

presented at
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BEHAVIORAL SELF-CONTROL
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Philip R. Spinelli, Ph.D. & Ted Packard, Ph.D.

Introduction

During the last 15 years, the development and refinement of a behavior modification technology has given psychologists, teachers and other professionals an array of new and powerful tools for their clinical "bag" - desensitization treatment for anxiety, reinforcement techniques for strengthening desirable behaviors, punishment and aversive strategies for eliminating undesirable behaviors, etc. But unquestionably, the newest notion on the scene is one that suggests that professionals reach back into their bags, take out the rather impressive armamentarium and turn it over to the public to use on themselves! (As Mahoney and Thoresen 1974 exclaimed, "Power to the Person").

Behavioral Self-Control strategies, as the term suggests, focus on giving the individual responsibility for changing his or her own behavior. This is accomplished by actively teaching clients basic behavior modification theory and procedures and having them apply the techniques themselves. This approach not only has the potential effect of accelerating the change process, but more importantly, providing the opportunity for the client to be the significant change agent thereby fostering increased feelings of self reliance and self respect. Behavior self-control procedures therefore are really innovative tactics for implementing behavioral interventions with an emphasis on training rather than treatment and the focus on self management rather than professional "healing." It is a deliberate, systematic attempt to provide the individual with effective strategies to improve his or her own life.

Behavioral Self-Control: A Developmental/Preventative Model for Counseling Services

The authors, like many of their colleagues in applied settings, have successfully used behavioral self-control techniques with clients. Their own efforts have supported the findings of research in that individuals have been able to grasp the basic concepts of behavior modification quickly and have developed specific behavior change plans in consultation with a professional. Results have been mostly favorable. Client's are usually intrigued by the notion of behavior analysis, the breaking down of a problem area into more manageable (behavioral) components, and systematically arranging life-space conditions so that change is likely to occur. They have generally responded favorably to the many "homework assignments" i.e., charting, diary keeping, etc., and have often become caught up in the excitement of their own progress.

This approach was inefficient, however, in that the professional counselor spent precious time repeating essentially the same concepts and strategies to one individual client after another. The obvious next step was to design a group format and this seemed especially relevant since the population being served were university students well acclimated to "learning situations."

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But as thinking developed the questions arose: "Why restrict such an experience solely to a client population that sought help by coming to a university counseling center? Why not view Behavioral Self-Control procedures as a useful skill for well adjusted non-clinical persons, namely normal college students?" In other words, rather than develop a remedial program for a troubled population, "why not provide a developmental/preventative program to undergraduates through a regularly scheduled class offered through an academic department?" As a way of testing this idea, Educational Psychology 262-5, Exploring Self Seminar: Behavioral Self-Control was offered during Fall Quarter, 1974, at the University of Utah. (A summary of the outline for this course is on page 8.)

Educational Psychology 262-5 - A Behavioral Self-Control Delivery System

Educational Psychology 262-5, Exploring Self Seminar: Behavioral Self-Control was offered as an undergraduate two credit class as part of the Exploring Self Seminar series sponsored each academic quarter by the Department of Educational Psychology and staffed by the University Counseling Center. It was taught as a pilot project by two Ph.D. level psychologists with considerable clinical experience. It followed the prescribed academic requirements for two quarter hours of credit in that the students attended the class two hours per week for ten weeks. A total of 15 students were enrolled.

Since this was not so much a class about Behavioral Self-Control, as an experience in Behavioral Self-Control, the course format included lectures and personal projects and group interaction. Students read and discussed basic concepts of behavioral modification as presented in Mahoney and Thoresen, Self Control: Power to the Person (1974). In addition, students met in small consultation groups with the instructors to develop individual self change plans around some problem area. As would be expected, all problem areas identified were "typical" (sub clinical) areas of concern that would be expected among an undergraduate college population, i.e., weight reduction, time scheduling problems, money management, etc. Action programs were developed by each student in consultation with the instructor, and time was provided during each class to discuss, refine, or modify programs and share progress.

Specific techniques developed and carried out by class members included identifying specific target behaviors, self monitoring (charting), making appropriate environmental changes and arranging for self imposed consequences. Each student made a behavioral contract each week and reported to the class on results. (See form on pg. 13).

Implied in the label "behavioral self-control" is a heavy emphasis on external, behavioral, action oriented interventions, and much of what went on in the BSC class was no exception. We did make an attempt, however, to introduce self-control strategies focused on two other basic dimensions of human experience--thoughts (cognition) and feelings (affect). In addition to equipping students with concrete behavioral intervention techniques, our purpose included providing complimentary experiences in cognitive self-control and affective self-control.

Cognitive Self-Control: Training in a self hypnosis procedure

Students were given two hours of training in a short term self hypnosis procedure outlined by Spiegel (1973). The purpose of introducing self-hypnosis as a strategy was to equip students with a technique which they might use to attempt to alter basic beliefs related to desired behavioral changes. For example, several students selected target behaviors that focused on increasing the amount of time they spent studying. At the same time they reported negative beliefs about their adequacy as students (e.g., "I never end up spending much time studying.") "I am both efficient and effective as a student" may be a more appropriate belief that facilitates the desired behavioral performance, and self-hypnosis held promise as a possible technique for changing personal beliefs. As Spiegel (1973) has indicated, "In hypnosis, peripheral awareness contracts (and) facilitates focal concentration. ...To put it succinctly. hypnosis is an altered state of attention which approaches peak concentration capacity." (pg. 2)

Affective Self-Control: Anxiety Management Training

Students were given two hours of instruction in Anxiety Management Training (AMT), a procedure developed by and previously demonstrated at this conference, by Suinn and Richardson (1971) for reducing tensions in a variety of situations. The rationale for including an AMT technique in a Behavioral Self-Control Class was based on the straightforward notion that tension and anxiety are commonplace feelings reported by college students. Such feelings many times interfere with their performance in carrying out daily responsibilities. AMT procedures offer an alternative to the over-reliance on drugs, alcohol, and other "external" tension relievers that so often result in more pronounced and serious difficulties.

Discussion

The results of this pilot program in teaching behavioral self-control techniques to undergraduate university students have been encouraging. College students were able to use the experience to execute positive changes in what would be considered normal life problems. Thus, the original notion of conceptualizing behavioral self-control tactics within a developmental/preventative model of counseling appeared to be a viable one. For this reason, Educational Psychology 262-5 has been instigated as a regular course under the Exploring Self class series and will be offered regularly each quarter.

From the authors' experience to date, it would seem that a behavioral self-control class has both remedial as well as developmental/preventative capabilities and as such, the inclusion of such a program within a "mental health" agency is advantageous. In addition to a basic "core" class, for instance, it might be possible to provide "satellite workshops," time limited training experiences in any one of several high frequency problem areas as weight reduction, assertive training, time scheduling, etc. Students who had already received basic training in behavioral self-control techniques through the class could then do more intensive work in an area of special concern. The class might also be used by counselors as a referral program for clients who wish to work on a specific problem or as a pre-counseling experience to better prepare themselves to utilize counseling more effectively. See figure 1 on next page for a graphic model.

AN AGENCY BEHAVIORAL SELF-CONTROL DELIVERY SYSTEM

Clientele
(Remedial, developmental and preventative goals)

Agency Intake-Diagnostic Process

Anxiety Management Training

Time Management Training

Assertive Training

Weight Control

Other Behavioral Self-Control Strategies

Time-Limited Behavioral Self-Control "Modules"

Personal Counseling

Clients
(remedial goals)

Basic Behavioral Self-Control Training Experience (class)

Undergraduate students
(developmental/preventative goals)

REFERENCES

Mahoney, M. & Thoresen, C. Self-Control: Power to the Person. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole, 1974.

Spiegel, H. Manual for Hypnotic Induction Profile. New York: Soni Medica, 1973.

Suinn, R. & Richardson, F. Anxiety management training: A non-specific behavior therapy program for anxiety control. Behavior Therapy, 1971, 4, 498-511.

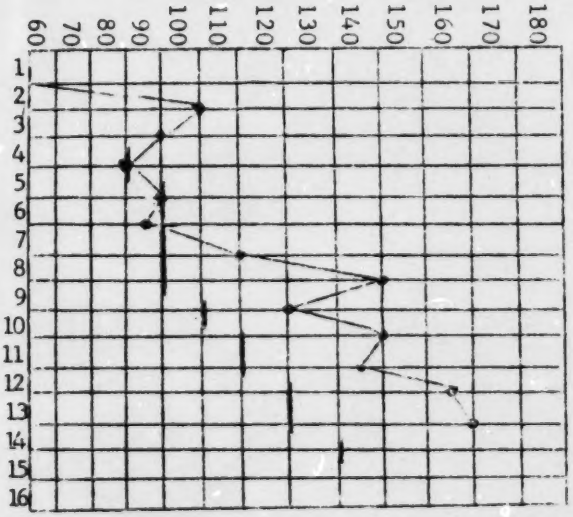
An Example

A major requirement of the class was the design and implementation of a "personal change" program. Students designed projects in such areas as weight control, money management, time scheduling, and even home cooking! (A married female student who initially perceived cooking as an aversive task, set out to increase the frequency of preparing home cooked meals, noting that her husband had become increasingly unhappy with their frequent "hamburger and french fries" dinners.) Given the pilot project nature of the class, plus the authors' developing interest in the topic, and also believing in modeling, we decided to each design our own "personal change" project and to share this information with the students.

One of the authors has been a combination counselor, teacher, and administrator for the past few years, and as a result had become a living example of the "harried administrators" syndrome (or game as Eric Berne would likely have called it). Telephone calls, meetings, classes, appointments, bull sessions, clients, graduate students, and requests from the Dean's Office somehow merged together in a way that produced frustration, piles of unanswered correspondence and incomplete projects, deep sighs, and colleagues who frowned vividly and not sympathetically when reminded of the busy schedule and chaotic work habits of their former friend.

Numerous prior strategies for change had failed. Without belaboring the point, Figure 2 below is the only personalized and emotional endorsement that will be allowed at this conference. The testimonial is subjective but the data is real, and the strategy was simple. The only specialized equipment needed was an electric clock with an of-off cord switch (approximate cost 40 cents) which was set to twelve o'clock at the start of each work day. "Desk time" was defined as time actually spent seated at desk working on projects or correspondence and did not include any time spent talking with others. An initial baseline period produced an average daily desk time of 57 minutes, an eye opening and discouraging finding.

Desk Time Average min/day during indicated week



Baseline
Consequence: 60 min. prior day for mail
" 90 " " " " "
" 100 " " " " "
" 100 " " " " "
" 100 " " " " "
" 100 " " " " "
" 110 " " " " "
" 120 " " " " "
" 120 " " " " "
" 130 " " " " "
" 130 " " " " "
" 140 " " " " "

The environmental strategy employed simply entailed crossing off three hours per day, typically from 8 to 11 p.m., as inviolate, sacred time that under no circumstances could be scheduled for anything other than desk work. (This strategy by itself had been tried numerous times in the past with little success.) The behavioral observation technique was briefly described above and involved turning on the clock when commencing work and turning it off when interrupted and at the completion of the work period. The necessary behavioral programming of self-imposed consequences was another matter. The author had a long history of promising himself a skiing jaunt, or some other desirable activity reinforcer, as a consequence of finishing various projects, but such approaches had never led to long-term stable change in work habits. A colleague hit on an ingenious reinforcer that was much more immediate and potent. Unless a certain level of performance was produced on the prior day, access to incoming mail would be denied on the following day. For one of a basically inquisitive nature, with a strong interest in knowing what was happening (i.e., "nosey"), this was a surprisingly aversive consequence. Accordingly, as Figure 1 indicates, the initial consequence provided for receiving the daily incoming mail <u>if</u> 60 minutes of desk time had been logged the prior day. The daily time goals were then systematically increased to a current level of 140 minutes per day (How else could one manage the various details of a BSC conference?) with a terminal goal of 180 minutes projected for mid Spring Quarter. Interestingly, the strongest reinforcers have turned out to be the accelerating curve on the graph kept by the authors desk <u>and</u> the decreasing piles on his desk. These have truly become potent consequences, and once again he has hope.

EXPLORING SELF - BEHAVIORAL SELF-CONTROL

Educational Psychology 262-5

Instructors: Dr. Philip Ron Spinelli; Dr. Ted Packard

Goals:

1. To increase understanding of the factors that influence one's own behavior.
2. Apply specific principles of behavior modification to one's own life.
3. Develop a personal behavior change program to be implemented as part of the course.
4. Acquaint students with selected strategies for gaining greater self-control over personal thoughts and feelings, i.e., self hypnosis and anxiety management training.

Overview:

The course will look at ways that man has of exercising greater control over his own behavior in a variety of life situations. Although some time will be given to readings, lectures and informal discussions of the principles underlying human behavior, the focus of the class will be on the application of such principles to one's own life. Time will be spent in defining ways that you would like to be behaving differently and systematically going about developing a behavior change program to accomplish this.

Evaluation:

A letter grade will be assigned to each student based on:

1. Class attendance and participation.
2. Performance on a mid-term mastery test.
3. Development and completion of one behavioral self-control program class project.
4. The development of a second behavioral self-control program (independent work in lieu of a final exam).

COURSE OUTLINE

October 3

I. a) Getting acquainted
   b) Exploration of personal expectations
   c) Presentation of goals and overview

Outside assignments: Chapters 1, 2; Articles 8, 14

October 10

I. a) Human behavior and environmental influence
   b) ABC's of self-control
   c) Self-control: a strategy for change

II. a) Getting specific: analyzing behaviors in concrete observable terms
   b) Personal assessment: selecting "target behaviors"

Outside assignments: Chapter 3; Article 9

October 17

I. Self-monitoring and charting behavior

II. Small group consultation for developing an action plan

Outside assignments: Chapters 4, 5; Articles 1, 2; Gather baseline data on target behaviors

October 24

I. Environmental strategies

II. Behavioral programming: self-reward and punishment

Outside assignment: Articles 12, 13

October 31

I. Behavior programming (cont.)

II. Mastery Test - Chapters 1-5 and selected readings

Outside assignment: Articles 5, 11

November 7

I. Small group consultation - progress report on behavior change goals, refinement and/or change

II. Cognitive-symbolic processes - an introduction to self hypnosis as a self-control technique

November 14

I. Group share-a-progress report on behavior change program

II. Self hypnosis training (cont.)

November 21

I. Small group consultation

II. Affective self-control - anxiety management training

December 5

I. Small group consultation

II. Anxiety management training (cont.)

December 12

Presentation of Student Projects

BEHAVIOR CHANGE - GOAL INVENTORY -- PART I

The following list describes a variety of human behaviors that are particularly amenable to change through self-control techniques. Review each of the brief descriptions. Place a mark after each one that you might possibly want to work on as part of a personal behavior-change project.

Academic: (Administrative)

_____ Attending class regularly
_____ Getting started on outside projects early
_____ Developing a routine study time
_____ Asking questions in class
_____ Entering into discussion in class
_____ Express opposing views in the classroom
_____ Increase concentration while studying
Other _____

Personal Habits/Health:

_____ Spending money
_____ Reduce or quit smoking
_____ Reduce body weight and improve eating habits
_____ Reduce nail biting
_____ Increase amount of sleep
_____ Decrease amount of sleep - getting up at a determined time
_____ Decrease use of alcoholic beverages
_____ Decrease use of drugs, i.e., tranquilizers, "pot," etc.
_____ Increase work on personal project, hobbies, etc.
_____ Increase amount of physical exercise
_____ Being prompt to appointments
Other _____

Family:

_____ Displaying more overt affection to loved ones
_____ Disagree openly with other family members
_____ Follow through more consistently with family responsibilities
_____ Being less critical of family members
_____ Being more complimentary to family members
_____ Increasing the amount of time spent with loved ones
_____ Doing more activities with family members
Other _____

Social/Interpersonal:

_____ Stating my own preferences more frequently with friends
_____ Initiating conversations with someone that I would like to know better
_____ Make greater facial contact with people to whom I am speaking
_____ Be more complimentary to others that I like
_____ Express my anger or dissatisfaction directly in the presence of others
_____ Talk more in the presence of friends
_____ Listen more in the presence of friends
_____ Initiate activities with others
_____ Spend more time with the opposite sex (dating, etc.)
_____ Express my own opinions with friends
Other _____

BEHAVIOR CHANGE - COAL INVENTORY -- PART II

In the spaces below take the statements that you marked and list them in order of decreasing importance to you. List first the one behavior statement that you would most like to work on, the second most, and so on.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

BEHAVIOR GOAL-SETTING WORKSHEET -- PART III

1) From the above list, select the one behavior-change goal that you would like to begin working on now. State the goal in your own words on the lines below.

_____

_____

2) Now let's see if this goal can be (or need be) stated in more behavioral or specific terms. Answer the following questions about your goal.

a) What would I be doing if I were accomplishing my goal?

_____

_____

b) What specific things might I be saying to myself while I was accomplishing my goal?

_____

_____

c) How might someone else know that I have changed?

_____

_____

d) When will I be doing it?

_____

_____

e) Where would I be doing it?

_____

_____

BEHAVIOR CHANGE - CONTRACT - PART IV

Weekly Contract

Name _____

Date _____

Goal _____

Agreement

Self _____

_____

_____

Other _____

_____

_____

Consequences

Provided by self
(if contract is kept) _____

_____

_____

(if contract is broken) _____

_____

_____

Provided by others
(if contract is kept) _____

_____

_____

(if contract is broken) _____

_____

_____

Environmental Planning

I agree to make the following changes in my immediate environment in order to help me honor the above contract.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____
Signature

_____
Witness

Review date _____